

ON THE SPREAD OF THE LIVING ROSARY CONFRATERNITIES IN TRANSYLVANIA (SZÉKELYFÖLD¹)

Abstract: The article presents and interpretes the data of three censuses conducted at different times (1900, 1902, 1928), and of the parish reports for 1913 to 1928 concerning the Living Rosary societies, using it to show the appearance and spread of the Living Rosary societies in Székelyföld and their existence up to 1928. As a final conclusion it can be said that the Living Rosary confraternity form was already widespread in the Székelyföld region at the turn of the century and even the major historical events of the period – the First World War, the Romanian occupation, the annexation of Transylvania – did not lead to their disappearance.
Keywords: Living Rosary, Székelyföld, male and female members, Roman Catholic communities, vicariates.

There are three forms of rosary societies in religious practice: the Rosary Confraternity, or the Archconfraternity of the Rosary, the Perpetual Rosary society and the Living Rosary prayer association.² The last of these is the most recent form: its first community was organised by Pauline Marie Jaricot.³ This form of society established in Lyon in 1826 spread rapidly throughout Europe. Research to date has been able to document its presence in Hungary from the 1840s.⁴ Research by Katalin Gergely⁵, Irma Gál⁶, János Báth⁷ and Enikő Gazda Szőcs⁸ brings us closer to its spread in the Székelyföld region. The earliest known formation of a

1 Székelyföld is one of the historical-ethnographical regions of Transylvania. Its administrative borders have changed many times over the course of history. Between 1437-1876 Székelyföld comprised five szék (administrative areas): Udvarhelyszék, Csíkszék, Háromszék, Marosszék and Aranyos-szék. After 1876 counties were created; their borders remained unchanged in the case of Csíkszék and were slightly modified for Udvarhelyszék and Háromszék. Marosszék was attached to Maros-Torda County and Aranyos-szék to Torda-Aranyos County. Under the Trianon peace treaty Székelyföld was annexed to Romania. From 1940-1944 Udvarhely, Csík Háromszék and Maros-Torda where the majority of the population were Szeklers belonged to Hungary, then up to 1968 formed part of the Hungarian Autonomous Province. Vofkori 1998. 17. For the purpose of this study I drew the borders of the region at the borders of the vicariate districts in Udvarhelyszék, Marosszék, Csíkszék and Háromszék.

2 BARNÁK 2011. 114.

3 BARNÁK 2011. 130.

4 BARNÁK 2011. 105.

5 GERGELY 1998.

6 GÁL 1998.

7 BÁTH 2007. 90-94; BÁTH 2006. 123- 126; BÁTH 2004. 147-148.

8 SZŐCSNÉ 2002.

Rosary Confraternity in Székelyföld was in 1728, in Gyergyószentmiklós.⁹ The literature reports on the existence of rosary confraternity membership records from Zetelaka (1728)¹⁰ and Csíkszentgyörgy (1800)¹¹. The earliest record so far on the establishment of a Living Rosary association in Székelyföld is known from research by János Bárh¹²: the Csíkszentgyörgy community was formed in 1845 and reorganised in 1887. Enikő Gazda Szőcs¹³ draws attention to a source from 1847, showing that 21 years after the appearance of the movement in Lyon, the Franciscans in Csíksomlyó were already engaged in popularising the new form of devotions. The handbook by an unknown author titled “Az Élő Lelki Rozsafaüzér” (The Living Spiritual Rosary)¹⁴ is probably a facsimile edition of the version published under the same title in 1844 in Kolozsvár.¹⁵ We do not yet know what other means the Franciscans active in Székelyföld used in their efforts to popularise this movement, whether they were involved in coordination of the confraternities, and who else urged the establishment of the new kind of rosary devotions in this region. It will be a task for further research to determine whether representatives of the monastic orders, the diocesan priests or laypersons played a greater role in the later extensive spread of the movement in Székelyföld.

The investigation of the type of rosary confraternity that evolved in the 19th century in Székelyföld is based on a summary and analysis of sources found in the Gyulafehérvár Archiepiscopal and Archdeaconal Archive¹⁶, and the Roman Catholic collecting archives in Transylvania¹⁷. I attempted to trace the appearance and spread of the Living Rosary confraternities in Székelyföld with the help of these sources and the Rosary Album published in 1900.¹⁸ Among the documents preserved in the Gyulafehérvár Episcopal and Archdeaconal Archive are the records of a census made in 1928 of the religious communities in the Transylvanian diocese, as well as an earlier version of the same census made in 1902. To ensure the most careful interpretation of the data in these two inventories, I also drew on a third group of sources, the No. XII reports.¹⁹

9 GERGELY 1998. 298.

10 FÁBIÁN s.d.

11 BÁRTH 2007. 90.

12 BÁRTH 2007. 92.

13 SZŐCSNÉ 2002. 22.

14 *Early Books Collection* of the Csík Székely Museum. ltsz. 5151. MUCKENHAUPT 2007. 41.

15 BARNA 2011. 157–158.

16 Revision of the archive under the jurisdiction of the Gyulafehérvár Roman Catholic Episcopacy (GYÉFKL) began in 1999 and was completed in 2003; it resulted in the publication of a two-volume repertory in 2006. SZÖGI 2006; BERNÁD 2006.

17 Thanks to a program begun in 2003 six collecting archives were set up in 2003–2008 in the territory of the Gyulafehérvár Roman Catholic Episcopacy (in Gyulafehérvár, Szamosújvár, Sepsiszentgyörgy, Gyergyószentmiklós, Marosvásárhely and Székelyudvarhely), where the documents of the Catholic parish archives have been collected. BERNÁD 2009. 8. Between July 2013 and July 2014 I was working in the collecting archives in Gyergyószentmiklós (GYFL GYGYL), Székelyudvarhely (GYFL SZUGYL) and Marosvásárhely (GYFL MGYL).

18 Further on abbreviated as RA.

19 On the basis of an episcopal plan drawn up in 1912, parishes were required to submit a special report each August also covering the Catholic societies operating within their church communities. TAMÁSI 2009. 19.

The *Rózsafüzér-album* (Rosary Album) was compiled by P. Imre Kindler²⁰, editor of the periodical *A Legszenőbb Rózsafüzér Királynéja* (Queen of the Most Sacred Rosary)²¹ in honour of the 1900 jubilee holy year.²² The publication²³ gives detailed information on the spread in Hungary at that time of the rosary confraternity forms granted permission to operate by the Dominican Order. Of the three confraternity forms only the Living Rosary had such recognition in the Transylvanian diocese. The order of formation, the name of the founder, the year of foundation and the number of members were given for all 94 “associations” functioning regularly at that time.²⁴ Only the number of members was given for three groups that had applied for recognition but had not yet received it. Since the list did not show the vicariates to which the groups belonged, they had to be identified. On the basis of the names of the founding church persons, and with the help of the *Schematismus* (Catalogue of church persons) for 1888²⁵, 1898²⁶ and 1900²⁷ as well as the Transylvanian gazetteer²⁸ and the catalogue of priests²⁹, it was possible to identify these with one exception³⁰. In two cases the list twice mentions establishments from the same church community under different names.³¹ Of the 97 Living Rosary confraternities in the Transylvanian diocese, 70 (72%) were organised in vicariates in the historical territory of Székelyföld (Alcsík-Kászon, Felcsík, Gyergyó, Kézdi-Orba, Maros, Seps-Barcaság, Székelyudvarhely). Their regional distribution was as follows: 11 (16%) in the vicariate of Alcsík-Kászon, 12 (17%) in Felcsík, 8 (11%) in Gyergyó, 7 (10%) in Kézdi-Orba, 12 (17%) in Maros, 6 (9%) in Seps-Barcaság, and 14 (20%) in Székelyudvarhely. Of these, only the Living Rosary confraternity in Szentegyházasszón was not officially recognised. The confraternities were established between 1885 and 1899. Regarding the founders of the 69 religious confraternities, there is only one person (director of a secondary school) we were unable to identify as secular or not; the other 68 are all church persons, in four cases Franciscans, the remainder local parish priests.

20 A Dominican Frater, who was editor of the monthly paper from 1895-1900.

21 A Rosary periodical, published in Hungary from 1885; it was launched and at first edited by Károly Zafféry, a Trappist and later Salesian monk. In 1895 the monthly publication came under the supervision of the Dominicans and from then on was edited by P. Imre Kindler. BARNÁ 2011. 177-180.

22 BARNÁ 2011. 188.

23 RA 1900. 295-344.

24 Rosary societies were supervised by the Dominicans since the 1880s. cf. BARNÁ 2011. 189.

25 SCHEMATISMUS 1888.

26 SCHEMATISMUS 1898.

27 SCHEMATISMUS 1900.

28 SZABÓ 2003.

29 FERENCZI 2009.

30 The only place we were unable to identify was Farnos. This Transylvanian settlement name does not figure in the Gazetteer either, nor is the name of the church person given listed in the Schematismus.

31 At the turn of the century three settlements belonged to the church community Csíknagyboldogasszony: Csíkjénőfalva, Csíkkarcfalva, Csíkdánfalva. The list shows the names of three villages without giving the church community in 1886, the establishment of the Living Rosary confraternity (with 105, 180, and 180 members) was urged by the same church person. In 1888 it reports 975 members in Nagyboldogasszony, but this is probably the archconfraternity of the three villages, however it was not possible to determine its connection with the groups formed in 1886.

The 1902 *census* of religious communities in the Transylvanian diocese was carried out for the report requested in the episcopal circular letter No. 1803/1902. The inventory titled "*Societies and associations of a religious nature in the diocese of Transylvania up to 20th May 1902*"³² lists the religious communities operating in the parishes of the diocese grouped by vicariate; it lists the year of establishment and the number of members, and also has space for remarks. There are very few church communities in the seven vicariates examined that did not send a report and in the majority of cases the year of establishment and the precise number of members are given. In some cases the date or simply the fact of reorganisation is mentioned. The use of names for the types of rosary confraternities is not consistent. The living rosary confraternity is most often called "Living Rosary Confraternity", less frequently "Rosary Confraternity", or "Sacred Rosary".³³ In the Székelyföld vicariates the societies were established between 1846 and 1903³⁴, with the greatest number falling between 1890 and 1900. The earliest were formed in the vicariates of Felcsík (1847 – Csíkcicsó, 1860 – Csíkdélne), Alcsík (1868 – Kászónújfalu, 1869 – Nagykászón) and Kézdi-Orba (1846 – Kézdivásárhely – Kanta, 1856 – Torja). The greatest number of reorganisations occurred in 1897 and 1900.

The 1928 *census*³⁵ of religious communities was probably conducted by the central administration³⁶ set up around that time for the Catholic associations of the diocese and took stock of the religious communities then operating in the Transylvanian diocese. It lists the Catholic associations of the parishes by vicariate, giving the year of establishment, number of members and the name of the leader and president.³⁷ Several names are used in the census for the rosary confraternity types; their use is consistent only for the Perpetual Rosary societies. The Living Rosary Confraternity is called "Confraternity of Mary", "Beads Confraternity", "Rosary Confraternity" and "Living Rosary Confraternity". There are church communities that listed several names simultaneously, suggesting that the confraternity type examined must exist behind each of them. There are big gaps

32 GYÉFKL. *Püspöki (Érseki) Hivatal iratai 1902.* [Documents of the Episcopal Office 1902]

33 In the diocesan summary the names used for the rosary society types operating in the parishes are those given by the data providers, but they were grouped into a single type for the total number of members given at the end of the vicariates. In the case of a few church communities where there was no rosary society, the presence of a Society of Mary was indicated. The use of nomenclature in the later census raises the possibility that this too may actually refer to the type of confraternity examined here, but the summary of the data for 1902 did not follow that approach. This point requires further clarification.

34 In a few cases the year of establishment is later than that of the census. The explanation for this is that the summing up of data was closed in January 1904 and an effort had been made in the intervening period to supply the missing data.

35 GYÉFKL. *Hítbuzgalmi egyesületek, társulatok iratai 1863–1947. Az erdélyi püspöki egyházmegye plébániáiban létező katolikus egyesületek jegyzéke esperesi kerületek szerint 1928.* [Documents of devotional associations and societies 1863–1947. List of Catholic associations existing in parishes of the episcopal diocese of Transylvania by vicariates, 1928.]

36 TAMÁSI 2009. 73.

37 The volume contains entries not only for 1928 but also for later years in an attempt to fill in gaps. From 1929, as a continuation of the previous volume, a record was kept over a period of ten years of changes in the annual membership of religious communities operating in the parishes of the diocese.

in the data on the year of establishment, the leaders and presidents. The greatest uncertainty is found for the year of foundation. Either the year is not given, or there are various remarks indicating lack of knowledge (unknown, uncertain when, cannot be established, etc.) or remarks indicating long existence (ancient, very old, has always existed, etc.). In some cases reorganisation is also mentioned, or only that is shown. The precisely stated dates of establishment range from 1876 to 1928. In most cases the names of the leader and president of the religious communities are not given, only that of lay leaders but even that is sometimes missing. In most cases the position of leader was held by the local parish priest and that of president by a lay person. In contrast, membership is always stated. The record contains only subsequent entries on the rosary societies in a few church communities. In these cases we took into account only those that also state the date of establishment or reorganisation and where the figures given for membership were not contradictory.

The last source group used was the administrative reports (*Relációk* ~ relations) that the heads of church communities were required to draw up annually. The reports had to be forwarded to the offices of the deacons; they were then aggregated by the archdeacon and forwarded to the episcopal office. Among the close to 20 different kinds of report, after 1912 the No. XII report concerned Catholic associations operating in the parish. A separate form had to be filled in for each religious community, giving the distribution of membership by gender³⁸, name of the leader³⁹, and a brief summary of activity in the past year. I examined the reports for seven years out of the period investigated (1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1925, 1928). In these reports the name of the Living Rosary type of society was much more uniform than in earlier surveys. In the majority of settlements there were also men among the members of the rosary confraternities. The reports only rarely revealed whether they carried out their activity separately or in mixed groups with the women. In most cases the local parish priest is given as head of the community. But there were places where this role was filled by lay persons, in most cases women, although men also held the office.

In the next section I present the findings of a comparative analysis of the data from the sources used, by vicariate. In the diocese of Transylvania seven archdeaconries fall within the historical territory of Székelyföld.⁴⁰ The presentation covers the territorial and administrative divisions existing in 1928, while the names of the vicariates and parishes⁴¹ follow present use. Among the filial churches I examined only those that were independent by 1928.

38 A number of forms can be found, some also show the distribution by age groups.

39 There are also forms that require the "employment position" of the leader to be given.

40 There are also settlements in the Küküllő vicariate that belong to Székelyföld, but they are not discussed in this article.

41 I have followed the terminology of the millennium report.

The *Alcsík-Kászón vicariate* comprised 13 parishes in 1900⁴², and 15 in 1928⁴³. In the period examined, in most of the settlements belonging to the vicariate⁴⁴ more than 90% of the population was Roman Catholic.⁴⁵ A considerable proportion of the remainder were Greek Catholics. According to the 1902 census a rosary society operated in every parish of the vicariate. According to the data of the Rosary Album, in eight of these church communities there were confraternities that the Dominican Order also recognised as functioning according to the rules. The report made in 1902 gives 1868 as the earliest date of establishment, while the jubilee yearbook mentions the earliest establishments in 1886. In the 1928 census the society form examined is not mentioned in four settlements, but it can be shown with the help of earlier entries and the reports made by parish priests that such a society did exist in these settlements at that time. It is only in the case of Csíkmindszent that we do not know whether it was due to lack of information provision or to actual non-functioning that information on the society established in 1888 with 190 members is available again only from 1930.

Summing up it can be said that the Living Rosary form of society was certifiably present in 100% of the Alcsík-Kászón vicariate in 1902 and in 93% in 1928. The reports mention male membership in most of the societies in the district⁴⁶, there are even cases where the numbers of men and women are equal.⁴⁷ The 1928 reports for this district do not allow us to determine the distribution by age. In 1902 the biggest confraternity had 1050 members, in 1928 this figure was 450.

The *Felcsík archdeaconry district* comprised 14 parishes⁴⁸ in 1900 and 20⁴⁹ in 1928. In Szépvíz there was also an Armenian Catholic rites church community. In the period examined the Roman Catholic population of the district exceeded 90% in the majority of the settlements. Here too, Greek Catholics made up the larger part of the remainder. The 1902 census makes no mention of a rosary society in two parishes. According to the data of the Rosary Album, in 1900 the society in 7 parishes has been recognised by the Dominican Order. According to the 1902 report, the earliest establishment was in 1847, while the Rosary Album gives 1886 as the earliest date. The 1928 report mentions no rosary society in 6 parishes, but it is in only two⁵⁰ that the No. XII reports do not indicate the existence of a rosary society in any year. According to the Dominican list, a rosary society was established in Csikta-ploca in 1899, in the 1902 report the date given is 1898, while in later reports it is only in 1914 that it is indicated, so we are unable to prove its existence at the end of the period examined. The Rosary Album mentions establishment in Balánbánya in 1892, the reports for 1913 and 1914 probably also refer to the existence of this society, but we did not find confirmation of its further existence in any other source.

42 SCHEMATISMUS 1900. 17-19.

43 SCHEMATISMUS 1929. 12-14.

44 The proportion is lower in certain settlements within the Kászón Basin, but nowhere less than 70%.

45 I took into account the data of the 1900 and 1930 population census. VARGA 1998.

46 The gender distribution is not shown in all cases.

47 In Csíkszentlélek in 1913 98 men and 102 women were members of the confraternity.

48 SCHEMATISMUS 1900. 19-21.

49 SCHEMATISMUS 1929. 14-15.

50 In Gyimesfelsőlök and in the Szépvíz Armenian rites parish.

Summing up, it can be said that the presence of the Living Rosary confraternity form can be confirmed in 87% of the church communities in the Felcsík archdeaconry district in 1902, and in 80% in 1928. The reports mention male members in all societies in all districts, with a higher proportion at the beginning of the period examined, declining towards the end. In the earliest Living Rosary confraternity established here in 1847 men made up 45% of the members in 1913 and 25% in 1928. According to the 1928 reports all age groups were represented in the society in five settlements. In 1902 the largest society had 1050 members, in 1928 this figure was 2250.

At the turn of the century 12 parishes⁵¹ belonged to the *Gyergyó archdeaconry district*. There was also an Armenian Catholic rites church community in Gyergyószentmiklós. In the first half of the 20th century Roman Catholics represented over 90% of the population in the majority of settlements of the district. The remainder was slightly more divided than in the districts already mentioned, but here too Greek Catholics predominated. Because of the absence of a report the 1902 census fails to give data on only one settlement, the rosary society form is mentioned in all other communities. On the basis of the information given in the Rosary Album, in 1900 seven church communities had Living Rosary confraternities operating with the authorisation of the Dominican Order. In 1928 the number of parishes in the vicariate district⁵² grew to 15.⁵³ Of these, according to the most recent census of the period, four did not have a Living Rosary society, but the reports for 1928 confirmed the existence of a society in another one. The reports for 1913-1917 indicate the existence of the society at that time in the remaining three church communities, but it is not known what happened to them by the end of the period examined. The 1902 census gives the earliest date of establishment as 1872 while the Rosary Album mentions 1886 as the earliest establishment in this district.

Summing up, we can say that the presence of the Living Rosary confraternity form can be shown in 92% of the church communities of the Gyergyó vicariate and in 80% in 1928. The reports for 1913 to 1928 continuously mention male members in this district too, with 23% as the highest proportion. According to the 1928 reports, all age groups were organised into the society in only one settlement. In 1902 the biggest society had 1235 members, and in 1928 the biggest had 1470 members.

In 1900 there were 18 parishes⁵⁴ in the *Kézdi-Orbai archdeaconry*. Here too most of the settlements had a Roman Catholic majority, similarly to the previous districts, above 90%. Territorially it is restricted to the villages of the Holy Land⁵⁵

51 SCHEMATISMUS 1900. 23–25.

52 SCHEMATISMUS 1929. 16–17.

53 BERNÁD 2009. 260.

54 SCHEMATISMUS 1900. 27–29.

55 This is the name used by the Protestant inhabitants in the south of the micro region for the Roman Catholic villages in the northern part of Háromszék. KÓSA-FILEP 1983. 177.

in the vicinity of Kézdivásárhely. But here the remainder of the population are divided among the Orthodox, Calvinist and Greek Catholic religions. There are also a few settlements where the majority of the population are Calvinists. With three exceptions, the 1902 census mentions the presence of the rosary confraternity form everywhere. Among the 15 parishes, according to the Rosary Album there were communities in five operating with the approval of the Dominican Order. The 1902 report indicates that the earliest establishment in the district was in 1846, while the earliest date given in the Rosary Album is 1885. The 1928 census does not mention the presence of the society form examined in seven church communities, but the 1928 reports indicate this absence only in one settlement.

Summing up, it can be said on the basis of the data examined so far, that at the turn of the century the Living Rosary confraternity form was present in 83% of the church communities in the Kézdi-Orba vicariate and in 1928 in 95%. Male members were continuously present in this district too. In 1902 the largest society had 300 members, and in 1928 585 members.

The *Maros archdeaconry district* had 20 parishes⁵⁶ in the early 20th century.⁵⁷ Here we find a population that is much more diverse denominationally, the Roman Catholic predominance in the settlements is not so strong, it is only in the villages of the Holy Land⁵⁸ along the Felső-Nyárád River that their proportion is steadily above 90%. The 1902 census does not mention any form of rosary confraternity in five of the twenty parishes in the district. But the 1928 list documents the establishment of rosary confraternities in Ákosfalva, and Görgényüvegcsúr at the end of the 19th century, giving the exact year. In addition, according to the data in the Rosary Album the latter society was officially recognised by the Dominican Order in 1895. Since they were established at a time very close to the end of the century and they still existed in 1928, it seems likely that they also existed in the early 1900s. Thus, according to our present state of knowledge, at the turn of the century only three of the 19 parishes did not have a rosary confraternity. The Rosary Album mentions the official existence of 12 communities in this district. By 1928 the number of parishes in the district had increased to 22 and according to the census in that year the society form examined did not exist in eight of them. However the 1928 reports do not mention the existence of such a society in only three of these. The 1928 census mentions the earliest establishment of a rosary confraternity as being in 1783, in Nyárádremete. Of those established in the 19th century the earliest was in 1878. On the basis of the data in the Rosary Album, the Dominican Order gave the earliest operating authorisation in this district in 1887.

Summing up, we can say that in 1902 the presence of the Living Rosary society form can be confirmed in 84% of the church communities of the Maros archdeaconry and in 1928 in 86%. Here too, the reports indicate continuous male

56 SCHEMATISMUS 1900. 33–36.

57 But probably because services for Mezőkerked were provided from Teke, both the 1902, and the 1928 records list it as a filial of Teke, I have adopted this approach too despite the fact that throughout the period examined it figures in the reports as a parish.

58 The inhabitants of the Protestant villages in the micro region referred to the Roman Catholic villages along the Felső-Nyárád river in this way. KÓSA-FILEP 1983. 176.

membership, in 1928 there was one community where it reached 44%. The largest membership was 345 in 1902 and 387 in 1928.

In 1900 12 parishes⁵⁹ belonged to the *Sepsi-Barcaság archdeaconry*. There are hardly any villages here with a Roman Catholic majority, in most cases their proportion is below 50%. According to the 1902 report three church communities did not have a rosary confraternity at the turn of the century. But given that the Rosary Album mentions that in 1898 a Living Rosary society with 330 members in Brassó was officially recognised by the Dominicans, it can be assumed that it still existed a few years later. In 1919 a new church community was formed in the district⁶⁰, so by 1928 the number of parishes had increased to 13⁶¹. According to the 1928 census the proportions had been reversed and a rosary confraternity operated in only three settlements at that time. However the 1928 reports mention the existence of a further two church communities. But the reports give no information on the later fate of the other communities. According to data in the Rosary Album six communities in the district had the approval of the Dominican Order, the earliest having been obtained in 1887.

Summing up, we can say that the society form examined was present in 75% of the parishes of the Sepsi-Barcaság vicariate in 1902, and in 38% in 1928. The presence of men can be observed throughout the period in this district too. They were completely absent only in 1928 from the Living Rosary confraternity in Brassó where it is interesting to note that the group was composed of German-speaking women. Probably the other four groups of the organisation, separated according to age and gender,⁶² were Hungarians, because no special mention is made of their ethnic identity. In this church community according to the data of the Rosary Album a Living Rosary society with 330 members was established in 1898 but no mention is made of it in the 1902 census. More recent information is provided in the reports for 1913, 1914 and 1917, throwing light on the existence of a rosary confraternity with 130 members (30 men, 100 women), 155 members (70 men, 85 women) and 160 members (10 men, 150 women) respectively. After that the only known data refer to the above-mentioned Brassó community from the end of the period examined.

The biggest Living Rosary confraternity in the district had 285 members in 1902 and 280 in 1928.

At the turn of the century there were 27 parishes⁶³ in the *Udvarhelyi archdeaconry district*, and by 1928 this number had risen to 29⁶⁴. In a substantial proportion of the settlements belonging to the vicariate the Roman Catholic population was over 90% in the decades examined.

⁵⁹ SCHEMATISMUS 1900. 13–15.

⁶⁰ SCHEMATISMUS 2010. 153.

⁶¹ SCHEMATISMUS 1929. 10–11.

⁶² Groups of school boys and girls, of youth and adult girls.

⁶³ SCHEMATISMUS 1900. 41–45.

⁶⁴ SCHEMATISMUS 1929. 28–30.

According to the 1902 report at the turn of the century four of the 27 parishes in the district did not have a rosary confraternity. The Rosary Album mentions 12 authorised societies. According to the 1902 census the earliest establishment was in 1883, while the Rosary Album gives 1888 as the earliest date. However, we succeeded in finding a document⁶⁵ in the Székelyudvarhely collected archive confirming the appointment in 1886 of the Zetelaka parish priest by the Viennese Dominicans as director of the society under his guidance that also meant official recognition of the society. In the absence of an adequate source we do not yet know why the Zetelaka community does not figure in the Rosary Album. The 1928 census does not mention a rosary society in four church communities. But with the help of the reports it can be confirmed that two of these did in fact have a society also in 1928.

Summing up we can say that in 1902 rosary societies operated in 85% of the church communities of the Székelyudvarhely vicariate district, and in 93% in 1928. The reports mention male members in the majority of societies, in cases even in equal proportions to women. The largest rosary confraternity in the district in 1902 had 795 members and in 1928 1153 members.

Conclusions

The article presented and interpreted the data of three censuses conducted at different times (1900, 1902, 1928), and of the parish reports for 1913 to 1928 concerning the Living Rosary societies, using it to show the appearance and spread of the Living Rosary societies in Székelyföld and their existence up to 1928.

In Székelyföld we find the districts of the church diocese with a continuously Roman Catholic majority, where the population remained true to their faith even after the Reformation. Among the vicariate districts examined this is the case for the whole of the Alcsík-Kászon, Felcsík and Gyergyó, the eastern part of the Kézdi-Orba district, the area of the Maros district along the Felső-Nyárád river, and the areas of the Székelyudvarhely district to the east and north of Udvarhely.⁶⁶ It is only in the remaining areas that a more diverse denominational distribution can be observed. There are large church communities in the Alcsík-Kászon, Felcsík, Gyergyó and Székelyudvarhely vicariate districts. The first initiatives to establish societies appear to have been made mainly here too, and it was here that the largest religious communities arose. Two Armenian rites church communities operated in the territory examined, one in the Gyergyó, the other in the Felcsík vicariate district. The data examined indicated the operation of a rosary society only in the former, but there is no information on it in the period after the First World War.

65 GYFL SZUGYL. *A zetelaki plébánia levéltára. [Archive of the Zetelaka parish]* Thematically arranged volumes 1738-1982. Rózsafüzér Társulat könyve 1886-1926 [Book of the Rosary Society 1886-1926].

66 LÉSTYÁN 1992. 26-27.

A comparative analysis of the data showed that in 1902 in the vicariate districts within Székelyföld, Living Rosary societies operated in an average of 87% and in 1928 in 80%. In the censuses analysed the earliest establishment of a rosary confraternity, 1783, is mentioned in the census of 1928 in the Maros vicariate. But research so far has documented even earlier establishments in the Gyergyó⁶⁷ and Székelyudvarhely⁶⁸ vicariates. The earliest establishment of a rosary confraternity is noted in the 1902 census, according to which such a society existed in Kézdivásárhely in 1846. But a date a year earlier in the Alcsík-Kászón vicariate is known from local research⁶⁹. According to the census of 1902, the greatest number of societies were established between 1885 and 1888, and between 1895 and 1900; the Dominicans gave the greatest number of authorisations in 1887. According to the data in the Rosary Album the earliest authorisation for a director in the Székelyföld region was given to the church leader of the community in Kézdivásárhely, in 1885. This appears to confirm that the tendency in this area was the same as that found throughout the country⁷⁰, namely that groups established after 1880 were mainly linked to the Dominican Order. The Dominicans did not recognise the legality of communities established earlier and without their approval. Consequently in the anniversary yearbook they compiled, the date given as the year of establishment is the date when the individual church leaders obtained their appointment as director and the authorisation of the Dominican Order. A comparison of the data in the censuses where the years of establishment is also indicated shows that in the reports made in the Transylvanian diocese in the majority of cases an earlier date is shown for communities established before 1900, or the date is the same as that shown in the Rosary Album. This appears rational since the societies applied to the Dominicans for authorisation after their establishment, generally not in the same year. But there are also cases where the date given in the Rosary Album is an earlier one. Here, either the date given is erroneous, or the diocesan census gives as the year of establishment of the confraternity the date of a later reorganisation.

We have analysed the membership data only incidentally. The reports on the Catholic associations were of great assistance in this investigation. They are available from the year following their introduction, that is, from 1913. Male members are found in all vicariate districts, and for the most part continuously between 1913 and 1928. In the Alcsík and Székelyudvarhely vicariate districts we find societies where the men and women are present in equal proportions. Their numbers decline mainly in the final years of World War One, but it is only rarely that they drop out altogether.

The 1928 reports offer the possibility for an examination of distribution by age; we can conclude that a wider range of age groups were involved in the life of the

67 GERGELY 1998. 298.

68 FÁBIÁN s.d.

69 BÁRTH 2007. 92.

70 BARNA 2011. 114-135.

societies in some church communities to meet the expectations of higher levels within the church, but this cannot be regarded as widespread.

As a final conclusion it can be said that the Living Rosary confraternity form was already widespread in the Székelyföld region at the turn of the century and even the major historical events of the period – the First World War, the Romanian occupation, the annexation of Transylvania – did not lead to their disappearance.

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Hungarian and Romanian Names of Settlements

(Abbreviations, counties: AB-Alba, CV-Covasna, HR-Harghita, MS-Mureş)

Balánbánya, Bălan, HR, RO
 Csíkdánfalva, Dăneşti, HR, RO
 Csíkjenőfalva, Ineu, HR, RO
 Csíkkarcfalva, Cârţa, HR, RO
 Csíkmindszent, Misentea, HR, RO
 Csíksomlyó, Şumuleu-Ciuc, HR, RO
 Csíkszentgyörgy, Ciucsăngeorgiu, HR, RO
 Csíkszentlélek, Leliceni, HR, RO
 Csíktaploca, Topliţa-Ciuc, HR, RO
 Gyergyószentmiklós, Gheorgheni, HR, RO
 Gyulafehérvár, Alba-Iulia, AB, RO
 Kézdivásárhely, Târgu Secuiesc, CV, RO
 Nyárádremete, Eremitu, MS, RO
 Szépvíz, Frumoasa, HR, RO
 Zetelaka, Zetea, HR, RO

Spread of the Living Rosary Societies in the Archdeaconries Investigated

